



Maine County Commissioners Association

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May 12, 2025

Sen. Beebe-Center, Chair
Rep. Hasenfus, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: ***Testimony of MCCA regarding LD 1114, An Act to Provide That Spouses and Children of Corrections Officers Who Die in the Line of Duty Receive a Pension***

Chair Beebe-Center, Chair Hasenfus, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

On behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to this Committee ***neither for nor against*** LD 1114. We recognize that similar survivor benefits appear to exist for other types of law enforcement personnel, and life insurance-related benefits for children and spouses appear to be in place for county correction officers.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all 16 of Maine's counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

What does LD 1114 do? LD 1114 would provide that the surviving spouses and children of corrections officers, including county corrections officers, who die in the line of duty receive a pension. The bill seeks to align benefits for corrections officers with those available to other law enforcement personnel who face similar risks.

LD 1114 creates a new benefit applicable to county corrections officers. LD 1114 creates a new pension benefit for the families of county corrections officers that already applies to many law enforcement officers. This benefit appears in statute at entitled: "*Death benefits for law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services persons, department of corrections law enforcement officers and corrections officers who die while in the line of duty.*" 25 M.R.S. §1612 Further, there is a specific statute applying such benefits to sheriffs in statute at 30-A M.R.S. §352.

Separately, the Department of Corrections has established a program applicable to county corrections officers that provides life insurance benefits to the surviving spouses or children when the officer dies in the line of duty. See MDOC Policy, *Line of Duty Death Benefit for Corrections Officers & MDOC Law Enforcement Officers*, [Policy Number 3.32](#).

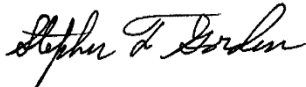
We are not opposed to the concept of expanding Maine law to require a pension for surviving spouses or children of county corrections officers who die in the line of duty. County corrections officers perform important services in often difficult conditions, and it is important that they and their families are appropriately compensated for their work and the risks they take.

Mandate preamble required. The cost of operating county jail services is primarily borne by local property taxpayers. Currently, the State contributes under 20% of the annual cost of operating county jails, leaving the remainder to come from local property taxpayers. Local property taxpayers are burdened with the cost of operating county jails even though the primary cost driver of county jails flows from the state's criminal justice system, including: the adoption of state laws criminalizing activities; charging decisions by state prosecutors; arrests by the state police; actions by the Department of Corrections to establish minimum operational standards of jails; and decisions made by Maine's courts to levy bail, convict, and sentence defendants.


To the extent LD 1114 establishes a new program that has a cost, it would be considered a local "mandate" under the Maine Constitution. As a result, the State would be responsible for 90% of the costs of this new program unless this legislation is adopted with 2/3 support with a mandate preamble.

Conclusion. We appreciate the Committee's attention to this issue and welcome further discussion on how best to support corrections officers and their families while ensuring fiscal responsibility at the county level. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,



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cc: Commissioner Andre Cushing, President, MCCA
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative counsel for MCC

